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ABSTRACT

Project D.A.R.E. (Development through Adventure, Responsibility and Education), an adventure-based outdoor program, uses a feedback/evaluation model, combining a learning component with a two-part participant observational model. The first phase focuses on evaluation of the child and progress made while he is in the program (stages one to four); the second is evaluation of the child by the referring agency, after the program concludes (stage five). Initially, the referring agency identifies one or more goals for each participant, to guide staff members in treatment of individuals. After five or six days, the staff team reviews goals set for each individual and establishes his learning stage. Midway through the program, the staff reviews each child's progress through learning stages of the goals. On the last program day, each child has a conference with the staff to assess his progress, which forms the basis for graduation from the program. A post evaluation of each graduate is carried out by the referring agency, using the goals originally specified for each individual; if the child has retained some progress made in the learning stages of specified goals, the program is considered to have had a significant impact. Appendixes contain instruments used in the program. (CM)

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AN ALTERNATIVE FEEDBACK/EVALUATION MODEL FOR OUTDOOR WILDERNESS PROGRAMS

A paper presented at the Eighth
Annual Conference of the Association
for Experiential Education at
Sante Fe, New Mexico, October 25, 1980

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FEEDBACK/EVALUATION COMPONENT

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Introduction

During the 80's, the tendency of funding sources will be to examine programs and the service that they are providing, to check to see that organizations are performing the services which they lay claim to. In the early 70's, the program at Project D.A.R.E. was observed and evaluated closely with the main thrust directed to "corrections oriented" recidivism studies. These reports were somewhat frustrating for the adventure based outdoor program as most of the key instructors in the field felt that this methodology did not tend to evaluate the work that was being done. These studies were terminated in 1976 when D.A.R.E. joined the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Some of the shortcomings of these are articulated in Cardwell's paper: "The Fallacy of Recidivism Studies, 1978".

Recently I had a long conversation with a prominent psychologist of one of our province's juvenile institutions who had studied these reports. He remarked that most of these studies were somewhat political in orientation and they were set up and produced to yield results that the system wanted to hear. He felt that they were of little worth and that if they were presented to true research professionals who were unbiased, that they would not be defendable.

When an evaluation process is commenced, it implies that something concrete is being done. It also infers that a strategy is present which guides a child during the program towards a pre-determined goal. In the past, the process of evaluation has been an aloof and unsatisfying experience for our organization. As a result, our program wanted a process that would be meaningful to everyone who was involved with the child. The referring agency's involvement is crucial as it wants and deserves information which is appropriate and workable. The instructors working with the child require a process with tangible treatment objectives and the provision of clear direction. The child must understand the process and the hidden agenda of the program must be clear. The researcher

needs a process which provides a bank of information so that an objective study is feasible.

After searching for numerous months, our program has settled on a feedback/evaluation model which combines a learning component with a participant observational model. Participant observation models are considered to be accurate measures of human behaviour. Many psychologists believe that they are more valid than the "traditional paper and pen test" although they are somewhat subjective in nature. In choosing this model, it was recognized that the program is time limited (only one month long for some of our clients and two months long for others) and that it is goal specific. Several steps emerged after these decisions. The first task was to articulate exactly what the program does, and then focus on what it does the best. The next step was to develop a process for screening applicants so that weaknesses that the children possessed coincided with the programs strengths.

For many years, numerous outdoor leaders have perhaps been somewhat naive about the retention impact of an outdoor wilderness program. Ir an effort to sell the concept, unrealistic expectations are frequently made. However, behaviouralists hypothesize that since outdoor wilderness programs are short, long term effects are unlikely. Therefore, the evaluative process must focus on progress made during the program and not attempt to lay claims as to how long the effects might be. Once the child leaves the program, he is influenced by another environment and control over him is lost.

The length of a program directly affects the aspects of learning that can be applied. It is felt that three learning components are essential:

a) Cognitive Learning - knowledge of factual data such as canoeing skills

b) Affective Learning - ability to deal with emotional factors i.e. ability to control anger

c) Psychomotor Learning - the implementation of actual behaviour change

Since time is a limiting factor in learning, a short program must focus on cognitive learning. A longer program can begin to emphasize both affective and psychomotor learning and consequently becomes treatment oriented.

The following is a breakdown of the learning components of our different programs:

a) Short Programs (one day to one week) - recreational focus with an introduction to cognitive knowledge.

b) Mid-range Programs (21 to 28 days) - cognitive and psychomotor learning.

c) Long-term Programs (6 to 8 weeks) - cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning (the emphasis is upon affective learning)

The participant observation model involves the following:

1. Goals are established for each child by referring agency personnel and staff members delivering the D.A.R.E. Program.
2. The goals are broken down to specifics and stated in a behavioural functional manner.
3. Scales of progression for each goal are established, based on a learning path. Each child is rated according to these measures so that a behavioural focus can be determined.

When attempting to articulate which components that a program addresses best, a long list was drawn up at the start. However, the following questions were asked about each goal:

1. What does it mean?
2. How will we recognize it?
3. How will we measure it?

After this process, seven specific goals remained. The participant observation model has been divided into two phases: the first phase focuses on evaluation of the child while he is in the program and the progress that he/she makes (includes stages one to four); the second phase is evaluation of the child by the referring agency and this occurs after the program concludes (stage five) and the child is in the community.

THE FEEDBACK/EVALUATION COMPONENT

Stage One - Every child that participates in a four week or eight week program at Project D.A.R.E., participates in the feedback/evaluation component. For each individual one or more goals are identified by the referring agency which guide the staff members at D.A.R.E. in their initial treatment of that child. A child who is participating in the four week program would have one and/or possibly two goals for our staff members to concentrate on, while a child in the eight week program would have two and/or possibly three goals.

Naturally children referred to the program must have behavioural goals that are in conjunction with the specific goals that D.A.R.E. is especially good at addressing. The following is a list of these goals:

1. Dealing with difficult situations.
2. Helpfulness to others.
3. Verbal communication.
4. Listening skills.
5. Doing what one has agreed to do.
6. Following direction/co-operation with authority.
7. Physical fitness.

An important strategy at D.A.R.E. is to involve the child as much as possible in these goals. It is important that we ask the following questions:

1. How often does the child do it?
2. Does he understand it?
3. Can he recognize it?
4. How good is the child at this particular goal?
5. Does he understand the value of it?
6. Is it good?
7. Does the child want to be good at the goal?

8. What does the child think of others who possess similar qualities?

When examining the hierarchy of goals it is significant for us to realize that D.A.R.E. is a continuum in human behaviour. We must ask if the child can identify the goal and realize that this continuum passes on to other stages.

Each child is evaluated at various stages in all of these goal areas. Before a child is able to reach any goal, he has to go through a definite learning progression:

1. Awareness: The child must be aware of the area of concern. e.g. aware of the concept of fitness.
2. Belief: The child must believe that that concept is one which should be addressed. e.g. believes that fitness is a good goal.
3. (a) Trying: The child tries at a superficial level at first. e.g. paddling a canoe in a straight line.
   (b) Trying: The child tries at a significant level at a later stage. e.g. dealing with an inter-personal conflict.
4. Regularity: The child becomes consistent in his effort to become fit.
5. Initiative: The child takes it upon himself to take initiative in identifying activities that will satisfy this need, without needing "prodding" by others. In some situations, the child may never reach this stage.

The referring agency is asked to undertake two steps in stage one: step one is to identify the goal (or goals) which is most important for the child; step two is to articulate where the child is in the learning progressions prior to the program. The tools prepared for use by referring agencies are contained in Appendix A.

Stage Two - Five to six days after the program has commenced, the staff team meets as a whole and reviews the goals set for each individual and

the learning stage that he is at. At this time a more refined tool is used (see Appendix B) by the D.A.R.E. staff. This meeting serves to ratify both the referring agency's observations and the D.A.R.E. staff's observations. If there is a substantial deviance in opinion about any of these details then the referring agency is contacted and a consensus of opinion is arrived at.

After Stage Two, the D.A.R.E. staff are able to focus in upon an individual's goals as a rapport has been established between the child and the staff members.

Stage Three - Midway through the D.A.R.E. Program, the staff meet and review each child's progress through the learning stages of the goals. A new goal may be identified and progress is recorded. The child is included in the process during his Phase One review board and a written report is forwarded to the referring agency.

Stage Four - On the last day of the D.A.R.E. Program, each child is once again conferred with and his/her progress is assessed by the staff. The same tool as in Stages Two and Three is used. This process forms the basis for a child's graduation from the D.A.R.E. Program. This written information is distributed to the appropriate referring agency also.

One of the strategies that is being employed when a child graduates from D.A.R.E. is what is termed "the roadmap approach". The child receives feedback from our staff on how he has done in the program, and then it is clearly stated to him what he should be aiming for in regard to the goals that he started off to try to attain.

It is at this time that staff members at D.A.R.E. can evaluate the immediate impact of the program upon a child. The staff are able to articulate what learning stage the child is at for each identified goal. This can be readily compared to Stage One and Two. As a result, a

definition of success for each individual can be made.

Stage Five - The post evaluation of each individual that graduates from the D.A.R.E. Program comprises the second phase of the evaluation model. This area is somewhat experimental as no one really knows what kind of lasting impact that outdoor wilderness programs have upon individuals.

It is our hypothesis that an eight week program should have an eight week period of retention after the program, as far as the identified goals are concerned. Similarly, the four week program should have a four week retention period. If an individual is able to retain the progress that he/she has made at D.A.R.E. for this period of time, then most experts feel that the program has been a success.

Stage Five is carried out by the referring agency and the tool utilized is similar to Stage One. If the child has retained some of the progress made in the learning stages of the specified goals, then it is deemed that the program has had a significant impact upon that individual.

Tracking System

The duration of the impact retention is a somewhat debatable issue. There are numerous opinions concerning the lengths of time that D.A.R.E. can expect the program to have influence over the child's behaviour upon termination of the actual experience. As a result, a tracking system will be set up for each graduate. The information that will be accumulated should help to answer numerous questions such as:

1. What child is most appropriate for the D.A.R.E. Program? (to clearly define our population).
2. What period of retention does the D.A.R.E. experience have upon children?
3. What environment appears to assist in the retention of gains made while in the program.

To help answer some of these questions, it will be necessary to attain

information similar to the following:

A) How intelligent is the child?

B) What is the educational experience of the child?

C) What is the family background? (especially the child's relationship with the father or mother).

D) What is his language background?

E) What is his cultural background?

F) Is he an urban boy, a rural boy, northern Ontario boy?

Children will be tracked for differing periods of time. Generally children that graduate from D.A.R.E. fall into three categories:

1. Successes
2. Children that fall in between success and failure.
3. Failures

One cannot expect the D.A.R.E. Program to last forever for every child, and D.A.R.E. cannot claim responsibility for behavior after a reasonable period of time. For example, if a child is returned to training school after graduation from D.A.R.E., then D.A.R.E. cannot claim responsibility for his behaviour after that. If a child has changed his home location, then this might have a drastic impact on his life. As a result, D.A.R.E. may cease tracking children after they have made another "turn in their life". The information gained by the tracking system would allow a sophisticated research approach to be applied to the program in the future.

Conclusion

One of the impacts of applying this model has been an alteration in our program rigidity. In the past our programs were very structured and scheduled, and changes were discouraged. Now changes are necessary as treatment strategies must be altered to suit the needs of the children and the attainment of their goals. It results in much inconvenience for our support unit. The next step for D.A.R.E. will be a focus on the

program components and the articulation of their individual processes.

At present there are some problems related to this model that require some attention:

1. Community referring personnel have difficulty understanding the model.
2. Some personnel do not often know their children well enough to be able to articulate applicable or appropriate goals.
3. We are presently having difficulty obtaining feedback from our community referring personnel after the program is complete. (Stage Five).
4. One of our shortcomings in our referral process is that often referring people do not focus in on exactly what the child's needs are. Instead people focus in on what they think that the child can do. An example of this is that frequently a referring agency will look at a boy physically and say that "he is a large husky individual, therefore the D.A.R.E. Program would be good for him". Instead of perhaps investigating what the child's needs are and then trying to refer him to a program which is more appropriate.

The following are some further thoughts on our model, for future attention:

1. That our expectations for progress on our developmental ladders (scales) should be scaled or differentiated so that referring agency people recognize that progress is made at a faster pace with some goals than others. i.e. A higher degree of progress is expected in physical fitness for some children than in listening skills as listening skills are more difficult to accumulate.
2. The retention of learning/change/development will be differential. This will be a function of the goal itself as well as the length of time it took the child to attain it. Probably an inverse

relationship will be present: the longer it takes to attain a skill, etc., the longer the retention will be and vice versa. After a period of time, we should be able to see a pattern develop.

The two most important components of the D.A.R.E. Program are that it is time limited and very goal specific. This influences the type of evaluation that can be performed. Since D.A.R.E. is better at some particular goals, then other goals are of a more incidental nature. D.A.R.E. is not capable of doing everything for every child, but is offering limited programs to a wide population and should be content to be evaluated on these.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

TOOL FOR IDENTIFICATION OF GOALS BY REFERRING AGENCY

Step One

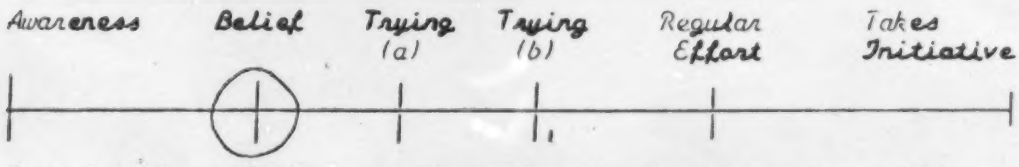
Prioritize these goals for the student from weakest to strongest as you see them:

_____ Dealing with Difficult Situations.
_____ Helpfulness to Others.
_____ Verbal Communication.
_____ Listening Skills.
_____ Doing What One has Agreed to Do.
_____ Following Direction/Co-operation with Authority.
_____ Physical Fitness.

Step Two

After prioritizing the goals, place the child in the learning stage you see him in, for each individual goal by circling the point on the continuum line that best suits the way he is now presenting himself. If you wish further clarification, the following Reference Points will describe those stages in more detail.

e.g. Dealing with Difficult Situations



Belief: The child believes that the situation facing him will have direct results in his own personal life or those around him and therefore should take appropriate action. (see Reference Points).

Tool for placing child in the Learning Stage

1. Dealing with Difficult Situations

2. Helpfulness to Others

3. Verbal Communication

4. Listening Skills

5. Doing What One Has Agreed to do

6. Following Direction and Cooperation with Authority

7. Physical Fitness

REFERENCE POINTS

1. Dealing With Difficult Situations

1. The child is aware that there is a problem or situation that is facing him.
2. The child believes that the situation facing him will have direct results in his own personal life or those around him and therefore should take appropriate actions.
3. (a) The child takes definite actions in dealing with the problem situation of factual nature in order to find an acceptable resolution, i.e., equipment breakage, pack sack, car.

3. (b) Behavioural and interaction situations, i.e., verbal abuse, physical threat presenting difficulties are approached as a workable and attempts are made to find resolutions that are suitable for all concerned.

4. The child carries out his action on a regular basis in order to resolve conflict and deal with frustrating situations in an acceptable manner.
5. The child's motivation and action stem from his own desire to deal appropriately with difficult situations.

2. Helpfulness to Others

1. Child is aware of the need for helpfulness in human interaction.
2. Child believes in the worth of being helpful.
3. Child begins to make recognizable efforts to be helpful.
4. Child satisfactorily interacts on a regular basis in a helpful way, despite situations such as frustrations, distraction or low level of energy.
5. Child takes initiative in identifying helpful situations and in responding to them, himself/herself.

3. Verbal Communication

1. Child is aware of the need for clear, honest verbal communication with others.
2. Child believes in the worth of making individual verbal contributions.
3. (a) Child makes recognizable efforts to communicate regarding neutral non-threatening factual matters.
3. (b) Child communicates in an understandable way about personal and behavioural matters.
4. Child communicates on a regular basis about cognitive or affective matters.
5. Communication about various topics is unsolicited and self-sustaining.

4. Listening Skills

1. Child is aware of the need to listen to others.
2. Child believes in the worth of listening to what other individuals are saying.
3. (a) Child makes efforts to listen, in order that the persons communicating have an opportunity to express themselves.
3. (b) Child listens attentively in order to understand the content of the message. The child would need to supply feedback related to his/her understanding of the message as well.
4. The child consistently listens to others in situations that relate to factual or personal matters.
5. Child initiates listening situations and demonstrates interest in other individual's point of view.

5. Doing What One Has Agreed To Do

1. Child is aware that doing what one has agreed to do requires a personal commitment.
2. Child believes in the importance of doing what one has agreed to do.

3. Child begins to take definite action toward satisfying the commitment that he has made. This action could be weak or intermittent, but nevertheless, an effort is being made.
4. Child consistently does what he has agreed to do.
5. Child identifies the need for action and acts accordingly, without external prompting.

6. Following Directions & Co-operating with Authority

1. Child acknowledges awareness that there are times when it is necessary to follow directions and co-operate with authority. In essence, the child agrees with the concept.
2. Child believes in the worth of following directions and co-operating with authority.
3. Child is actually working toward following directions. Effort is being made, although it may be sporadic or weak.
4. Child is consistent in his effort, despite difficulties that may arise. Cooperation is consistent and reliable.
5. Child determines appropriate action for himself in ensuring that directions are followed in a cooperative fashion, without having to be requested by peers or authority figures.

7. Physical Fitness

1. The child is aware of physical fitness and its importance to leading a good and healthy life.
2. The child believes in the worth of keeping his body in good, physical health.

3. The child is putting in a physical effort in order to improve his physical condition.

4. The child is becoming more regular and consistent in carrying out a program best for him.

5. The child is taking it upon himself to become involved in physical activities, i.e. games, hobbies, etc. which he is interested in.

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTORS' REFERENCE

D.A.R.E. Instructors will be making use of the following material to assess the student's progress in each goal area in greater detail. Also, the following progressions will assist Instructors in identifying the child's needs and in determining ways that they may assist the student in progressing from one stage to another.

Basically, this material is a further breakdown of the Reference Points for the Tool which the referring agency will be using to assist in evaluating the student before and after the child's participation in the D.A.R.E. program

Dealing with Difficult Situations

1. The child acknowledges an awareness that dealing with difficult situations is part of areas of cognitive learning.

2. The child identifies difficult cognitive learning situations that the child has previously been successful with.

3. The child is assisted in recognizing that exercising patience, tolerance, determination, communication, etc., has assisted him in being successful in dealing with difficult situations.

4. The child is assisted in developing a willingness to embrace new difficult cognitive learning situations and articulate his/her motives for doing so.

5. The child accepts that exercising patience, tolerance, determination, communication, etc. will also assist him/her in dealing with difficult human situations.

6. The child identifies that he/she responds with anger, sense of accomplishment, fear, warmth, avoidance, sullenness, etc., when dealing with difficult home situations.

7. Child identifies in what way they are responding to a specific difficult human situation.

8. The child learns to modify his response in an appropriate manner in order to deal with difficult human situations.

Helpfulness To Others

1. Child accepts that there are times when it is desirable to be helpful to others and can articulate why it is desirable.

2. Child identifies times during which it is desirable for some group members to be helpful to other group members.

3. Child develops some capacity for recognition of specific group needs and identifies a way in which he/she can be helpful to the group in fulfilling those needs. These needs do not necessarily have to be emotional in nature and their recognition needn't be spontaneous but may be solicited by peers and instructors.

4. The child responds to either the group or an individual in a helpful way. The response must involve the child verbally or physically in meaningful human terms. Again this response needn't be spontaneous but can be solicited by peers and instructors.

5. The child identifies and responds to another individual's needs in a helpful way without being requested or directed to.

Verbal Communication

1. Child acknowledges an awareness that clear and honest communication between people is important.

2. Child identifies a specific situation where it is important that group members clearly and honestly communicate with other group members.

3. Child identifies a specific situation in which it is important that he/she clearly and honestly communicate with peers and/or instructors.

4. Child communicates in a clear and honest manner with instructors and peers when the conversations are confined to neutral, non-threatening topics.

5. Child begins to take part in verbal communication which addresses behavioural and attitudinal issues, though these verbal interactions are directed towards group interaction on the whole rather than specific individuals. The child's willingness to communicate needn't be spontaneous but may be solicited by peers and instructors.

6. Child displays an ability to identify other individuals avoidance responses to communicate in a clear and honest manner with issues that involve their personal behaviours and attitudes.

7. Child shows a willingness to communicate in a clear and honest way with issues that involve his/her personal behaviour and attitudes. The child's willingness to communicate in this way needn't be spontaneous but may be solicited by peers and instructors.

8. Child actively seeks honest and meaningful verbal interchanges with regard to his/her actions and attitudes.

Listening Skills

1. Child acknowledges an awareness that it is important that people listen to each other.

2. Child identifies a specific situation where it is important that group members listen to other group members.

3. Child identifies a specific situation in which it is important that he/she listen to specific situations or comments from peers and instructors.

4. Child listens to specific instructions and/or comments from instructors and peers in a non-rejecting way when these instructions and comments are confined to neutral, non-threatening areas.

5. Child begins to accept comments which address behavioural and attitudinal issues, though these comments are directed towards group interaction on the whole rather than specific individuals.

6. Child displays an ability to identify other individual's avoidance responses to comments which address behavioural and attitudinal issues, for example: excuse making, making a joke out of something, defensiveness.

7. Child shows a willingness to listen in a non-rejecting way to comments referring to his/her personal behaviour and attitudes.

8. Child actively seeks comment and constructive criticism with regard to his/her actions and attitudes and displays an interest in other's point of view.

Doing What One Has Agreed To Do

1. Child acknowledges awareness that doing what one has agreed to do requires a personal commitment.

2. Child accepts that fulfilling a personal commitment will effect the way others perceive and respond to them.

3. Child develops ability to identify specific situations in which doing what one has agreed to do will contribute to successful interpersonal relations.

4. Child identifies specific situations in which he/she must make a personal commitment.

5. Child is successful in meeting some personal commitment.

6. The child determines appropriate direction for himself and makes commitments on that basis without having to be requested by peers or authority figures.

Following Directions/Co-operation with Authority

1. The child acknowledges awareness that there are times when it is necessary to follow directions and co-operate with authority. In essence, the child agrees with the concept.

2. The child identifies specific circumstances when it is appropriate for the group to accept directions and co-operate with authority in order to ensure such things as group safety, well-being, efficiency, etc.

3. The child is able to identify circumstances for specific individuals within the group where their acceptance of direction and co-operation with authority is necessary in order to ensure group success.

4. The child predicts and makes commitment to his/her future acceptance of direction and co-operation with authority with respect to his or the group's success.

5. The child fulfills commitment when requested by peers or authority figures.

6. The child determines appropriate direction for himself and makes commitments on that basis without having to be requested by peers or authority figures.